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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8007
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1860
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1663
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1086
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1478

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 000528

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: SHOOTING IN HAITI'S CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 453

[B](#). PORT AU PRINCE 320
[C](#). PORT AU PRINCE 520

[1](#). (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified--please protect accordingly.

[2](#). (SBU) Summary: The Chamber of Deputies suffered more damage to its reputation April 1 when Deputy Joseph Mercier Isidor (RDNP-Jeremie, Grand'Anse) shot a parliamentary staff member during an argument with a fellow Deputy. Several prosecutors showed up to arrest the shooter, but were denied entry into the building. A small crowd gathered outside the parliament to protest the Deputies' behavior and the Chamber's lack of progress on urgent issues. Deputies from various parties have decried the incident, with one going so far as to call on President Preval to intervene and bring order to the lower house. The shooting highlights the fact that many members of Haiti's unruly legislature walk around armed, and is yet another distraction from important business, including internal reforms in the Chamber and work on vital legislation. End summary.

[3](#). (SBU) Deputy Joseph Mercier Isidor (Rally for Progressive National Democrats/RDNP - Jeremie, Grand'Anse) on April 1 brought a firearm into the main chamber of Parliament. It discharged during an altercation with fellow RDNP Deputy Anthony Dumont (Leogane, West), wounding parliament clerk Antonio Celestin in the shoulder, who happened to be standing nearby. Eyewitness Deputy Patrick Domond (Lespwa/Jacmel, Southeast) told Poloff April 2 that the argument began when Deputy Dumont, in reaction to a Chamber report on the irregular activities of the former Treasurer (ref A), accused Deputy Isidor of misappropriating parliament funds and supplies.

[4](#). (SBU) Port-au-Prince Chief Prosecutor dispatched several assistant prosecutors to the scene soon after the shooting, but Deputies and Parliament staff prevented them from entering the building and arresting Isidor. Deputy Sorel Francois (Fanmi Lavalas/Port-au-Prince, West), told Poloff that Gassant's office on April 2 issued an arrest warrant for Isidor but the Haitian National Police have yet to locate him. Francois claimed that after considering Isidor's role in the interpellation of Prime Minister Jacques Edouard

Alexis in February (ref B), he is sure to face political retaliation from the GoH. Chamber President Eric Jean-Jacques (Lespwa/Tabarre, West) immediately announced plans to form a commission to investigate the incident.

¶5. (SBU) Embassy staff witnessed the gathering of approximately 50 citizens outside Parliament immediately following the incident. Protestors shouted about continuing hunger and the high cost of living in Haiti, and accused the deputies of ignoring the plight of the people.

¶6. (SBU) Following the shooting incident, former Chamber of Deputies Finance Committee Chairman Jonas Coffy (Fanmi Lavalas/Port-au-Prince, West) lashed out at his fellow legislators for failing to show up for work (Note: only 37 of 99 Deputies were in the chamber that day), lamented the general ineffectiveness of Parliament, and called on the President to halt the chaos and close down the legislature. (Comment: Coffy cited Article 136 of the Haitian Constitution, which makes the President ultimately responsible for the functioning of all public institutions. It is not clear how shutting down Parliament would help make it more functional. End comment.) Coffy told the press that he and most legislators carry weapons.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: This shooting has further distracted the Chamber from urgent business and further tarnished the image of the legislative branch. On the heels of a very negative report about the handling of finances in the Chamber (ref A), as well as an escalating investigation into the potential dual nationality of members of Parliament (ref C), the urgent issue of the electoral law seems further away from consideration and passage.
SANDERSON